



TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING THOUGHTFULLY AND INCLUSIVELY DURING A CRISIS

Communication is a key component in any situation that involves uncertainty, stress and fear. Especially when events are out of the ordinary, offering strong, reassuring and strategic communications can make the process of change easier and more effective by fostering teamwork and engagement. The COVID-19 crisis is not the time for hierarchy and process, it is time for leadership, creativity and execution.

Communicating in a Crisis

In a crisis situation, strategic messages can be communicated clearly by following a three-part formula: (1) Establish empathy: it will help calm the recipient and help them hear your message. (2) Deliver the big picture perspective and purpose. (3) Explain what step we are taking to get there.

Over-Communicate to Employees

Under uncertainty, there is no such thing as too much communication. There will be many messages sent out, and it is unreasonable to expect that everyone will read them all or even remember the ones they have read. It's also key to offer communication in many different formats because people simply communicate differently.

Crisis Communication Tips	
Keep it short.	A crisis is not the time to sound pedagogic. Keep communications both short and simple so your core message will stand out. Avoid formal or flowery language.
Share that you care.	Affirm in your messages that the health and safety of your employees and community is your top priority.
Affirm your core mission.	Connect to the organization's mission and values. For example, you are acting because you want to keep the business operating, make critical products, be able to continue providing salaries, etc.
Explain.	With the stress of change, it helps to remind people frequently about how your decisions help the bigger picture and them. How is this action helping the crisis to be resolved? Don't assume everyone knows what you know.
Remain active and available.	The world runs 24/7 and people with questions want to know their manager and organization leadership are there for them.
Share uplifting examples.	Do you have a success story that exemplifies an attitude or solution? Something that worked in the face of the crisis? Share it.
Be patient. Repeat yourself.	When the brain is stressed, we forget, we resist understanding, we don't absorb details. Keep putting your message out there in different forms and media.
Be vulnerable.	Share your struggles too, but not in a "poor me" way. While being vulnerable doesn't always feel comfortable, listeners trust you and listen better when you are sharing the burden along with them.
Be honest and transparent.	Honesty may also feel difficult, but it wins in the long run. Lack of transparency will accelerate distrust, which is a harder problem to eliminate later, and people will stop listening and following directions. Everyone has a good nose for falsehood and pandering. If you don't know, admit it. If you made a mistake, apologize.